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Laimute Balode
Anthroponymic Nests in Latvian

1. Introduction

1.1. Question regarding variants of the name

This article analyses the given name or first name system of Latvian – one of the Baltic languages – with particular emphasis on the names of common etymons. Latvian anthroponymy does not have a unified theoretical position on name variants and independent names. For example, Latvian has many names that differ in some letters: *Denīze* (91)¹ ~ *Denisa* (14), *Oto* (176) ~ *Otto* (210), *Keita* (1,053) ~ *Kēta* (5), and those with difference in some diacritic marks that indicate long and short vowels: *Ādams* (175) ~ *Adams* (60), *Alīse* (5,038) ~ *Alīse* (96), *Amēlija* (486) ~ *Amelija* (98), *Arturs* (12,705) ~ *Artūrs* (4,159), *Emīlija* (3,256) ~ *Emilija* (232), *Egils* (1,594) ~ *Egīls* (623), *Einārs* (54) ~ *Einārs* (1,083), *Grēta* (124) ~ *Greta* (65), etc. Some names also have more than two variants: *Beāte* (944) ~ *Beate* (123) ~ *Beata* (188) ~ *Beāta* (60); *Celīna* (4) ~ *Celina* (4) ~ *Celine* (3) ~ *Selina* (18) ~ *Selīna* (128). The question is whether these are actual variants or different names. To quote the newest Dictionary of Latvian Linguistic Terminology (VPSV 2007: 438): “Variation – any modification; the specific expression in variants”, and “Variance – synchronous existence and functioning of units (variants) in a language.” Latvian onomastic theoretician OJĀRS BUŠS writes: “the difference in one letter is considered to be completely sufficient to separate two different personal names from each other” (2003: 13). In other words, let us consider two names used in Latvian: *Alīse* and *Alīse*. While they are supposed to be different names from a functional documentary perspective, at the same time, from an etymological perspective, they are variants of the same name. Until now, onomasticians of the Baltic languages have not focused on the variants of given names that exist in local anthroponymy. Furthermore, given names of common origin in the Latvian language have not been analysed in detail. Only a few articles address this problem briefly (BUŠS 2003, SILIŅA-PINĶE 2005, 2013, 2014, 2015, JANSONE 2010, 2015).

The aim of this research, which is only in the initial stages, is to collect information on all Latvian given names that have “evolved” from the same

¹ Figures after name correspond to the number of persons bearing this name in Latvia (according to the database of the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs, 2017 (= PMLP, available <http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/sakums/statistika/personvardu-datu-baze/>).



name or the same etymon and to create what might be called “name trees”. For these trees, we attempt to determine the time when the names first came to Latvia, to identify the names that were coined in Latvian from a definite etymon, and to ascertain the contemporary usage of the name in Latvia.

1.2. Data of the research

The author of this article has collaborated with an undergraduate student at the University of Latvia, DANA BEŅKE,² to collect and create “trees” of given names that have the same etymon. Only those anthroponymic “nests” or “trees” were drawn that have more than six names or “branches”. This research is mainly based on the dictionary *Latviešu personvārdu vārdnīca* (Dictionary of Latvian Personal Names) compiled by KLĀVS SILIŅŠ (see SILIŅŠ 1990), which includes approximately 8,000 given names (400 of them are very rare names). Of the given names, 1,114 names that share a common origin were excerpted (those with the first letters of the Latvian alphabet *A, Ā, B, C, Č*) and categorised into 159 etymological nests. The 22 largest etymological nests, containing 604 given names, were included in the Bachelor of Arts thesis of DANA BEŅKE. Ten of these anthroponymic nests are described in this article. All anthroponymical material was checked and compared with the database of *Personal Names Register of the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs* (hereafter referred to as the PMLP) where one can find contemporary data on the frequency of names in Latvia among all inhabitants.

2. Examples of Latvian given name “nests” or “trees”

To illustrate how the analysis was conducted of Latvian given names with the same etymon and structuring of possible first name “trees”, let us consider the following observations.

The Latvian first female name *Adelheide* < Germ. *Adelheid*: Old High German *adal* ‘noble’ + *-heit* ‘kind, sort, type’ (KOLHEIM–KOLHEIM 2007: 38), i.e. *Adel* ‘nobility’ (?); first recorded in Vidzeme – in the middle region of Latvia – in 1831; this name was included in name almanacs in 1901 (SILIŅŠ 1990: 40). There are currently only two persons registered in Latvia by the name *Adelheide* (PMLP). Today there are known 18 given name variants and 13 sub-variants that were coined in Latvia from the etymon name *Adelheide* > *Adaļa*, *Adelaīda* ~ *Adelaīde* (from which was made hypocoristic name > *Laida* ?),³ *Adele* (> *Adelija*, *Adelīna*/-e, from which > *Alīna*/-e, *Adella* ?), *Āla* ~ *Āle*, *Aleite*, *Aleta*,

² See DANA BEŅKE’s Bachelor thesis (BEŅKE 2015).

³ The question mark after the given name indicates that the origin of that name is not clear. Two question marks imply a high level of uncertainty.

Alīse ~ *Alise* (from which possibly *Aila* ?? and *Ailo* ??, as well as *Alīcija*), *Alheite*, *Alīda/-e* (> *Alīdija*, *Aloida*), *Heide*. Many of the forms of the name *Adelheide* coined as hypocoristics came from or through the German language, such as *Adelaīde*, *Adele*, *Adelija*, *Adelīna*, *Adelīne*, *Alīna*, *Alīne*, *Aleite*, *Alise*, *Alīcija*, *Alheite*, *Alīda*, *Alīde*, and *Heide*. The time of the first recording in Latvia (from historical documents and given name almanacs, or calendars) was taken from the above-mentioned Dictionary (SILIŅŠ 1990), but one has to be rather careful with the data mentioned in this dictionary – they need to be checked and supplemented. This date of the first recording is mentioned with the name in the anthroponymic tree (see Figure 1). The situation of modern Latvian anthroponymicon was checked from the data in the PMLP. Today, the use of what is referred to as “alive” given names in this nest are the following in their order of frequency: *Alise* ? (5,038), *Alīna* ? (2,972), *Adele* (440), *Adelīna* (377), *Alīda* (191), *Alīse* (96), *Adelija* (58), *Aleta* (41), *Alīne* ? (38), *Aloida* (26), *Alīde* (12), *Alīcija* (4x), *Adella* ? (3), *Adelaīda* (1). What is referred to here as an anthroponymic “nest” or anthroponymic “tree” of the etymon *Adelheide* can be seen in Figure 1.

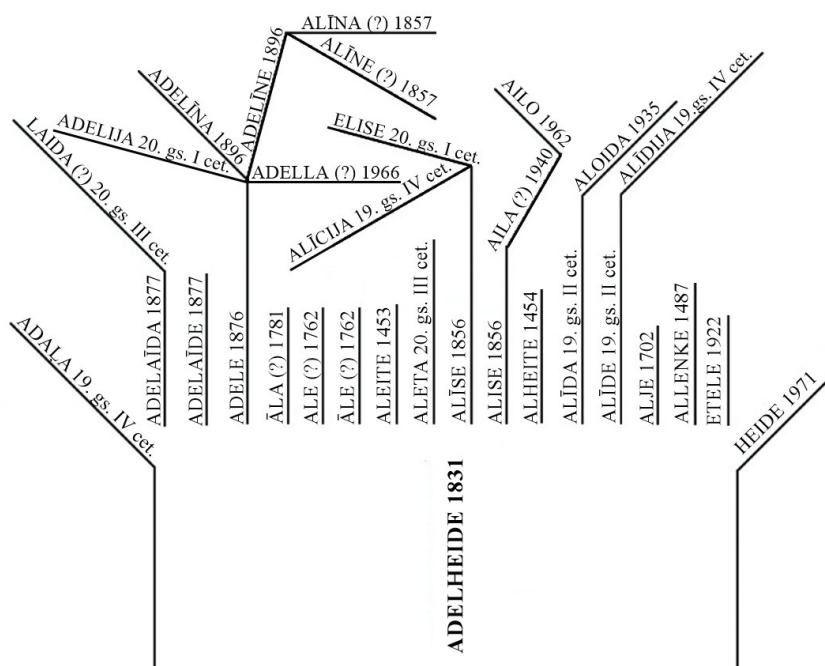


Figure 1: Adelheide⁴

⁴ The number after given names in pictures refers to the year when the name was registered in Latvia. Due to technical reasons there are Latvian abbreviations left in pictures: Latv. gs. = century, Latv. cet. = quarter.

Other examples of analogical given name “trees” include the following: *Adriāns* – with fewer “branches” – six variants and six sub-variants, the Latvian male name of Latin origin (< ‘from (H)adria’), known in Latvia from the very beginning of the seventeenth century; the most popular names from this tree are currently *Adrija* (401, data from 2017) and *Adriāna* (309), *Adriana* (620) (see Figure 2).

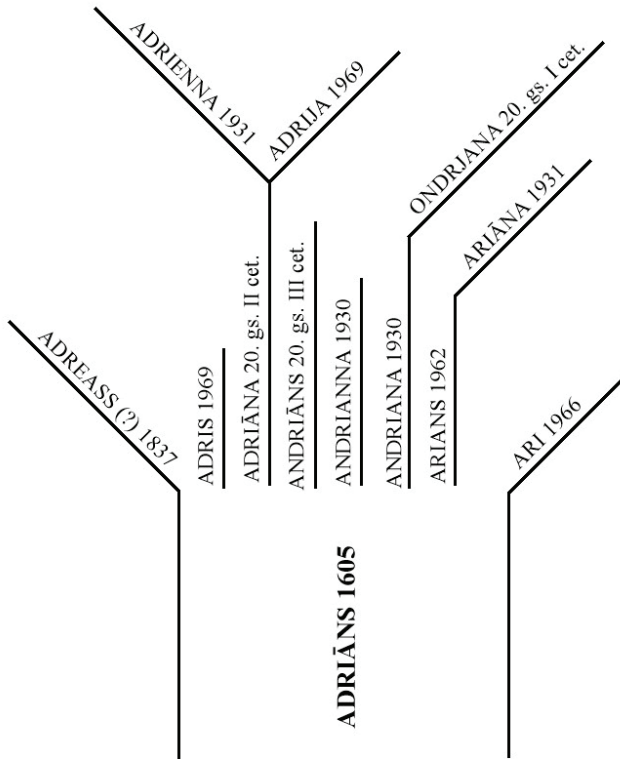


Figure 2: *Adriāns*

A rather popular Latvian female name, *Agnese*, a name of Greek origin (< *hagnós* ‘chaste’) may have been borrowed from German into Latvian (see KOLHEIM–KÖHLHEIM 2007: 42). The name *Agnese* has been used in Latvia since the fifteenth century (1462). *Agnese* is also an etymon for more than 25 names in Latvia: *Agnete*, *Agnieta*, *Agniete*, *Agna*, *Agne*, *Agnis*, *Inese*, *Inesa*, *Nēze*, etc. (see Figure 3). Today, the most widespread names are the rather new female name *Inese* (13,371), recorded first only in 1922, but at the end of the twentieth century, this name owes its popularity to the song “Inese” by the Latvian composer Raimonds Pauls; *Inesa* (816) which has spread predominantly in Russian-speaking families. Other popular names nowadays

are *Agnese* (6,259), *Agnija* (674), and the male name *Agnis* (823). However, the female name such as the hypocoristic *Nēze*, which was popular at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, is currently recorded only once – as a middle name (most probably to commemorate a grandmother) – *Elīza Nēze*.



Figure 3: Agnese

The given name of the Latin origin of *Amanda* is much “younger” than previously analysed *Agnese*: *Amanda* was given to newborns in Latvia only since 1893, although it was included in the almanac as early as in 1767 (SILIŅŠ 1990: 54). *Amanda* is the etymon for eight names and four sub-variants (see Figure 4). Today, the most popular names from this anthroponymic “tree” are: *Amanda* (2,626), *Anda*⁵ (2,911), although a male name *Amands* is extremely rare, but the hypocoristic male name *Mandis* nowadays is not used at all.

⁵ The origin of the female name *Anda* in Latvian has several possible hypotheses: it can be coined from the Latvian male name *Andis*, or created as a hypocoristic form from *Amanda* or *Andris* (for more information, see SILIŅŠ 1990: 56).

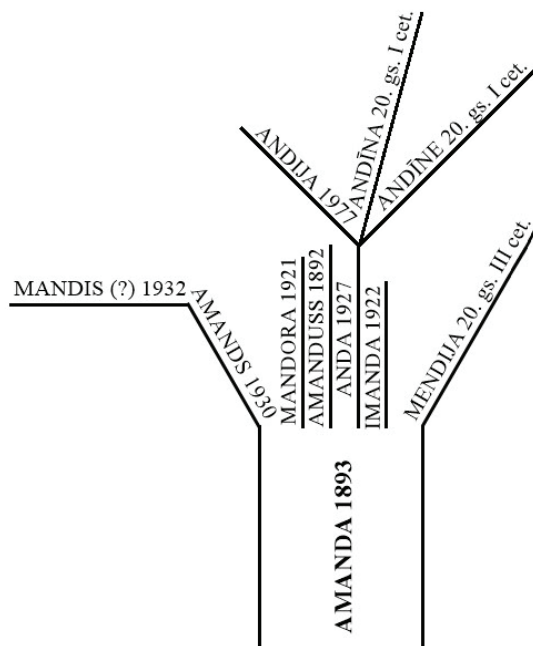


Figure 4: Amanda

The “anthroponymical tree” of the etymon *Amanda* has a rather small number of branches, but some of these “trees” have many branches. For example, 82 given names and variants from *Anna* are used in Latvian (see Figure 5), 68 from *Andrejs*, 58 from *Antonijs*, the especially forked “tree” with 51 names from *Aleksandrs*, 48 from *Bartolomejs* (see Figure 8), 43 from *Elizabete*.

The forms of personal names (i.e. given names or first names) have entered Latvian from several languages, such as the tree for the etymon *Aleksandrs*, which has been used in Latvia since 1638, and this serves as evidence for the following possible types of borrowing: *Aleksandrija*, *Saša*, *Alla* (??), *Sana*, *Šura* (?) most likely from Russian; *Allija* (?), *Aleksis* (?), *Aleksa* (?) from English; *Sandija*, *Sandijs* from English or Scottish; *Sandra*, *Sandro* from Italian; *Sanders*, *Zanders*, *Zanda* from German; *Sandors*, *Šandors* from Hungarian, etc.

The anthroponymic tree of *Anna* (used in Latvia since the 15th century) (see Figure 5) shows the wide variety of possible borrowings: *Ana* from Spanish, Bulgarian, Serbian, Croatian; *Ane* from Danish; *Aneta* from Czech; *Anete*, *Nineta*, *Ninona* from French; *Anita* from Spanish; *Anja*, *Anjuta*, *Annuška*, *Anusija*, *Aņņa*, *Aņuta* from Russian; *Anka* from German or Polish, Bulgarian, Slovenian, etc.; *Anlīze* from Dutch, Danish, German, etc.; *Anmarija* from Dutch, German, etc.; *Anne* from English, French; *Annika* from Swedish,

Finnish; *Arianna* from Italian; *Hanna* from Hebrew; *Hana* from Czech, Slovak, Croatian, etc.

The only few “branches” from this “tree” (Figure 5) – female names *Ance*, *Annuža*, *Annele* – are coined in Latvian as diminutive forms or hypocoristic names.

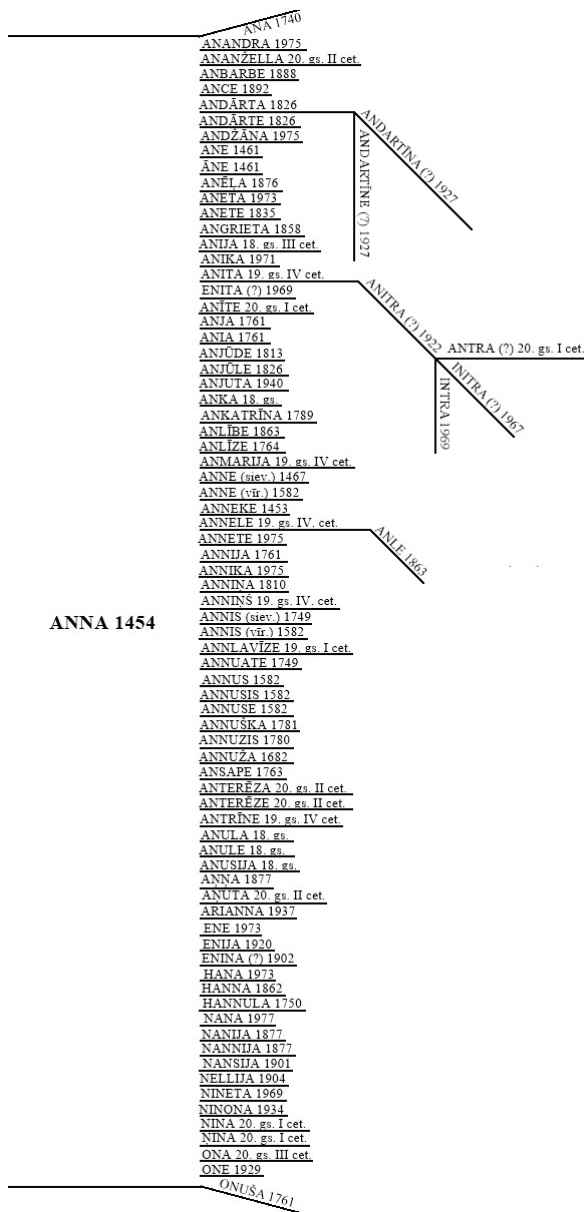


Figure 5: Anna

Some of these etymon names were borrowed throughout history from German, such as *Arnold* (< ancient German *arn* ‘eagle’ + *walt* < *waltan* ‘to rule (over), to govern’ (KOHLEHEIM-KOHLEHEIM 2007: 65)), attested in Latvia since 1590, included in the almanac since 1767 (SILIŅŠ 1990: 69). This “nest” contains approximately 20 names, predominately hypocoristic forms (see Figure 6). The etymon name *Arnolds* is currently not as exceedingly popular (1,687) as the shortened hypocoristic form of *Arnis* (4,694). The female form *Arne* is used far less (only 14 times), *Ārne* (only 2). Male name forms such as *Arends* (5), *Arens* (4) are extremely rare in contemporary usage, but the name *Arnds* is recorded only in historical documents.

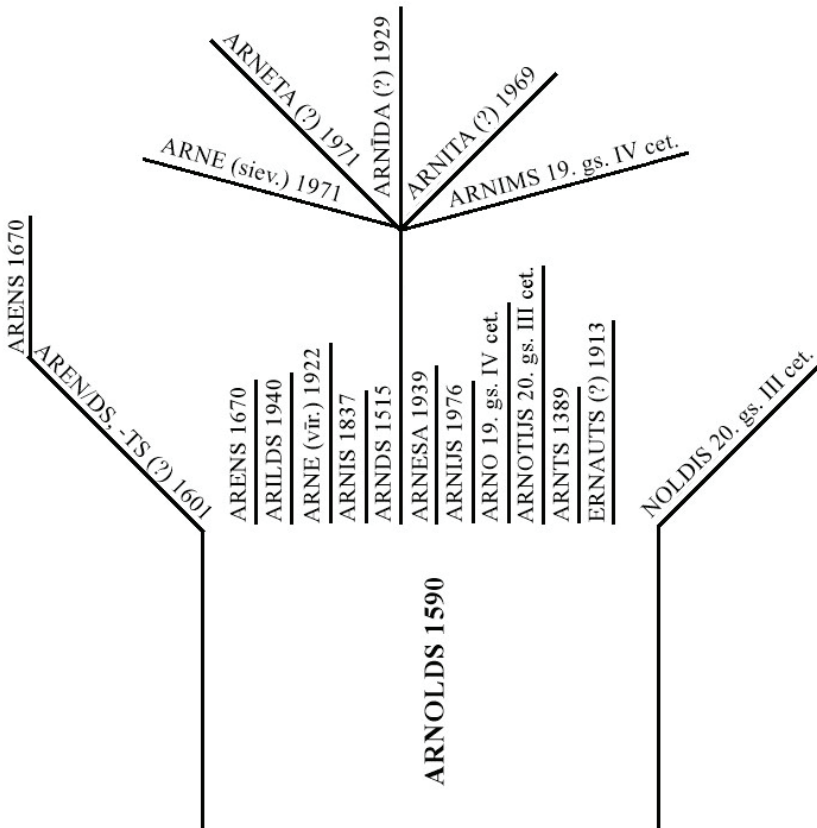


Figure 6: Arnolds

Both Latvian given names *Barbara* and *Bartolomejs* are from the thirteenth to the fourteenth centuries in Latvia (see Figure 7 and 8): *Barbara* was first recorded in 1399 < Latin *barbarus* < Greek *brabaros* ‘foreign’ (KOHLEHEIM-KOHLEHEIM 2007: 73, SILIŅŠ 1990: 78), and *Bartolomejs* was first mentioned in Latvia in 1289 < an Aramaic name *Bar Tolmai* ‘son of Talmi’ (SILIŅŠ

1990: 78), in German *Bartholomäus* registered already in the twelfth century (KOHLEHEIM–KOHLEHEIM 2007: 74). Both names are connected to religion and Scripture. The “tree” for *Barbara* in Latvian has 17 “branches” or names and variants. The etymon name *Barbara* is currently not as widespread, with only 101 people bearing this name, but the hypocoristic name *Baiba*, which was created by the Latvian poet Rainis and spread after his favourite play “Pūt, vējiņ!” (Blow, little wind!, 1913) (SILIŅŠ 1990: 76), is currently exceedingly popular: *Baiba* occurs 6554 times. Other names, such as *Baba* (recorded in 1618), *Babiņa* (in 1743), *Balba* ? (in 1607) and *Balbiņa* ? (known in the middle of the nineteenth century), are no longer used in contemporary Latvian. The etymon name *Bartolomejs* is likewise no longer popular in Latvia, as only one person has it as a given name, and only one has it as a middle name. A slightly more popular form of *Bartolomejs* is the shortened form *Barts* ~ *Bārts*: only five people have this name in all of Latvia. Even the male name *Bērtulis*, dating back to 1620, and adding a sub-branch to this tree with other names (*Bēts* 1691, *Bets* 1691, *Bērtus* 1638, *Bērcis* 1638, *Bērčis* 1638, *Bēcs* 1638, *Bēčs* 1638, *Bēcis* 1638, *Baiče* ? 1744, *Baics* ? 1929; see Figure 8), are currently virtually unknown; cf. *Bērtulis* (4) recorded in the PMLP, but the rest of the above-mentioned male names are recorded only in historical documents.

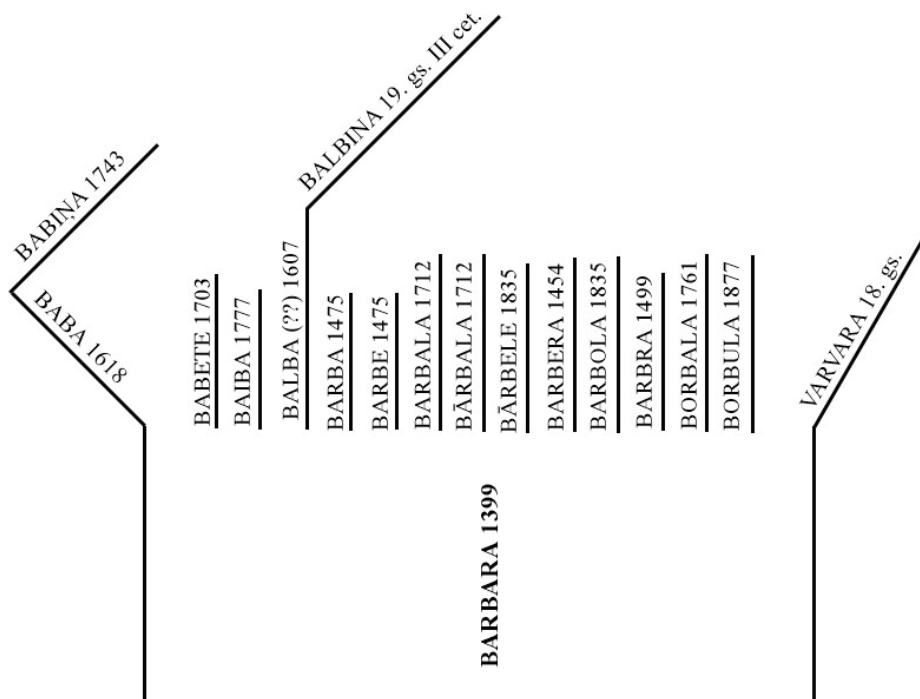
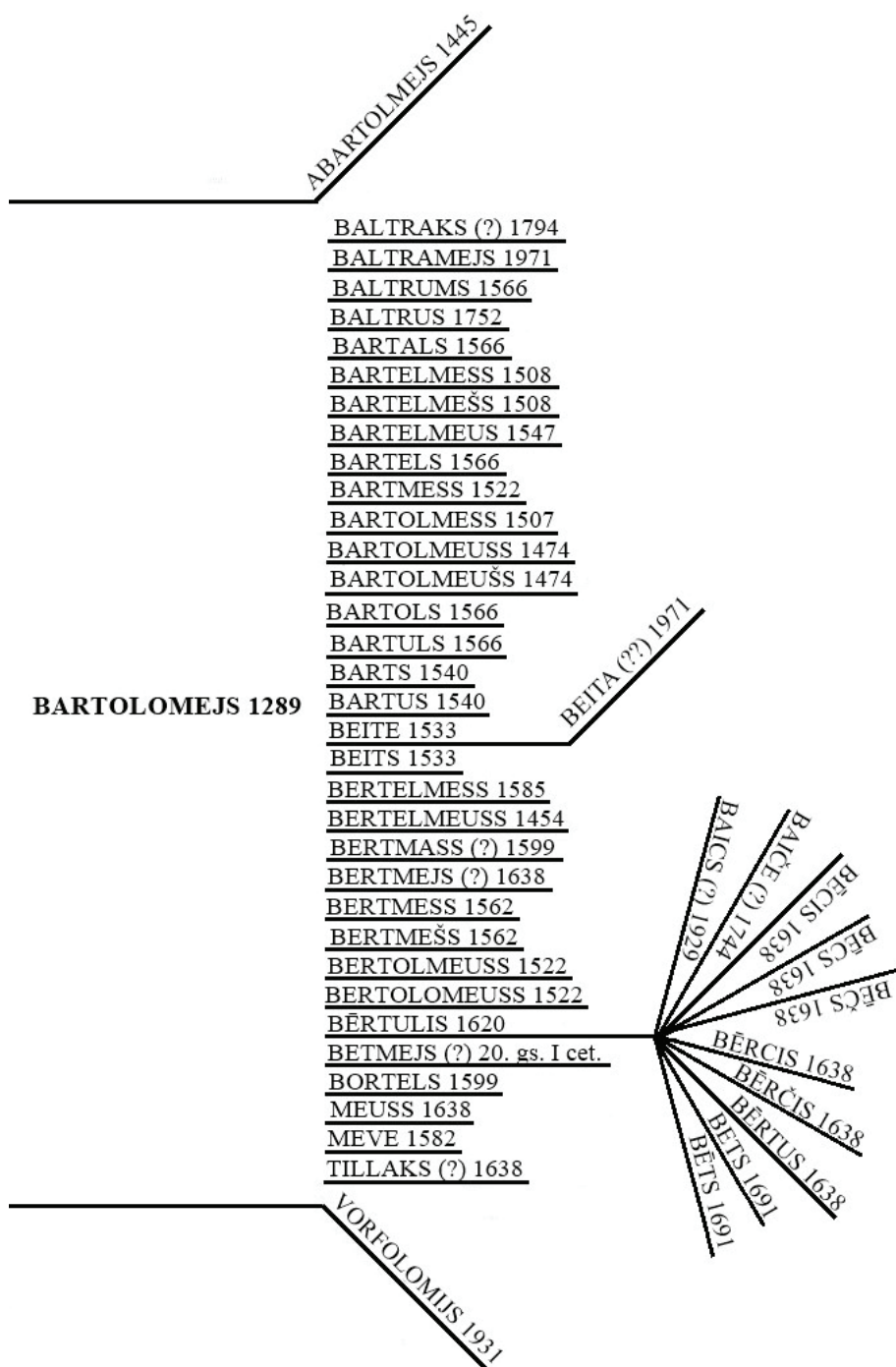


Figure 7: Barbara



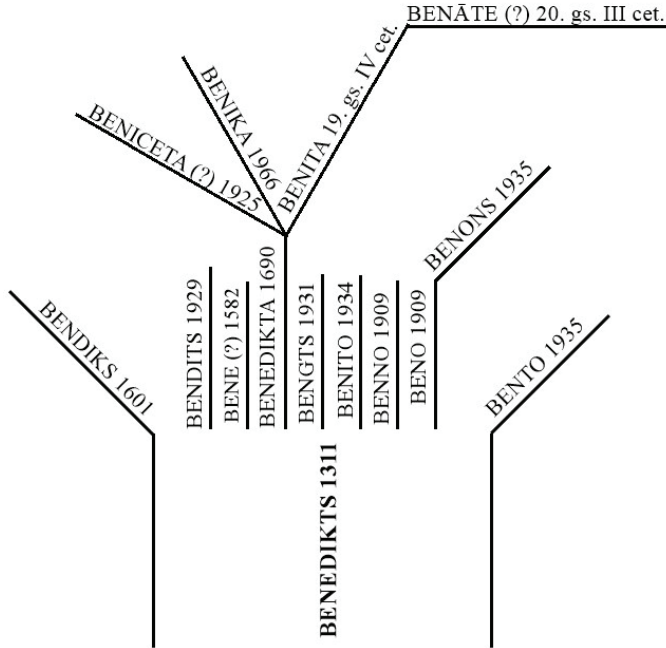


Figure 9: Benedikts

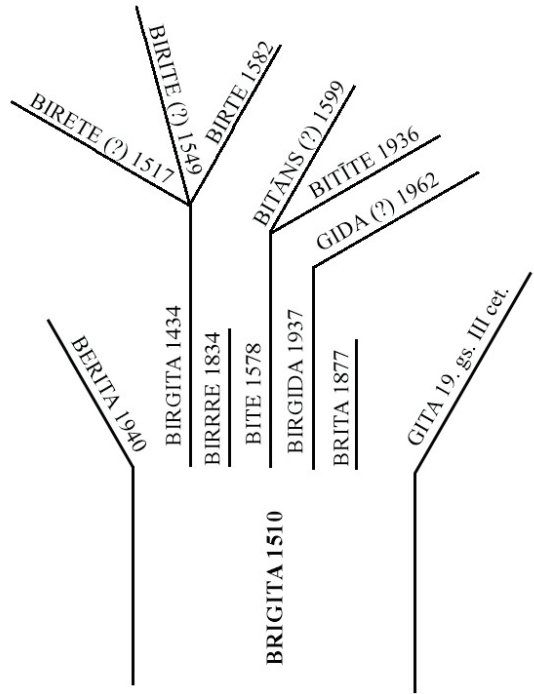


Figure 10: Brigita

The “trees” for the etymons *Benedikts* and *Brigita* do not have as many forks (see Figure 9 and 10). The given name of Latin origin, *Benedikts* (< *benedictus* ‘blessed’), is a very old name in Latvia, dating back to the fourteenth century. *Benedikts* was first recorded in Riga in 1310 and it has been included in almanacs since 1767 with its popularity peaking between 1920 and 1944 (SILIŅŠ 1990: 80). The “tree” for *Benedikts* consists of 13 branches. At present, the male name *Benedikts* is not widespread in Latvia, as only 40 men have this name and the same number of females (41) are named *Benedikta* (PMLP). But currently a shortened form of Spanish origin, *Benita* (987), is far more popular. This name appeared in Latvia only at the end of the nineteenth century and was included in the name almanac only in 1915. It was most popular for newborns from 1945 to 1970 (SILIŅŠ 1990: 80). The other names on this tree are not currently used in contemporary Latvia (except for the very rare names *Bengts*: 2 and *Benons*: 1).

The etymon *Brigita* < Celtic *brigh* ‘(morality) power’, the name of a goddess in Irish, was first recorded in Latvia (Riga) in 1510 and it has been recorded in the Latvian almanac since 1767. *Brigita* mostly spread between 1920 and 1970 (SILIŅŠ 1990: 86–87). This tree also has 13 branches. Two names derived from it are currently popular – the etymon name *Brigita* (1,884) and the hypocoristic name *Gita* (2,789), which also could have been borrowed from German (see KOHLHEIM–KOHLHEIM 2007: 178). The other names, such as *Bite* (0) and *Bitīte* (9) can also be of Latvian/Baltic appellative origin; cf. *bite* ‘bee’. The name *Bitē* occurs in Lithuanian, although a new name, which is not attested in historical sources (KUZAVINIS–SAVUKYNAS 1987: 100, DABRYTĖ–SAKALAUSKAITĖ–PAKALNIŠKIENĖ 2014: 40).

As many as 44 names are known to be derived from the etymon *Elizabete*, which was first recorded in the mid-thirteenth century (1252), and it is currently rather widespread (3,349 in all of Latvia), a name of Hebrew origin found in the Bible < *ēlīscheba* ‘my God is an oath’ or ‘my God is abundance’ (SILIŅŠ 1990: 113, KOHLHEIM–KOHLHEIM 2007: 136–137). We have not drawn an anthroponymic tree for this etymon, but the following are all the Latvian names for this “nest” (all of them are only female given names): *Elizabete* > *Eba* occurring in the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century, *Bete* 1513 (> *Beta* 1923, *Betija* nineteenth century), *Elīza/-e* 1861 (> *Elise* ~ *Elize* the first quarter of the twentieth century), *Elizāne* ~ *Elizane* 1935, *Ella* ? 1959 (> *Elli* ? 1971, *Ellija* 1865), *Edlīze* during the second quarter of the nineteenth century, *Elza* 1506 (> *Elsa* 1506, *Elzija* 1938), *Elsebe* 1460, *Elzebe* 1422, *Elsebete* 1913, *Elske* 1511, *Elzēns*,⁶ *Elžele*, *Elžuks*, *Elzbete* eighteenth century, *Elžbeta* eighteenth century, *Līza/-e* 1695 (> *Liža/-e* 1745, *Līzele* nineteenth century, *Līzbete* 1797,

⁶ *Elzēns*, as well as *Ilzēns*, *Ilžāns*, and *Ilžuks* are female given names, but they occur with masculine gender endings. These forms are popular in colloquial speech.

+ *Lote* = *Lizelote* ? 1922), *Ilze*/-a 1458 (> *Ilzēns*, *Ilžāns*, *Ilžuks*, *Ilzebe* 1413, *Ilze* + *Marija* = *Ilzemarija* 1927, *Ilzene* 1468, *Ilzīte* 1942, *Ilzke* 1507, *Ilža* 1461). The most widespread names that currently belong to this “tree” or “nest” in their order of frequency are: *Ilze* (11,998), *Elizabete* (3,349), *Elza* (2,640), *Elīza* (2,013), *Betija* (292). But the names such as *Beta* (10), *Eba* (2), *Elizane* (1) are extremely rare, while many others are only found in historical documents.

3. Some conclusions

In the *A-Ā-B-C-Č* segment of Latvian given names, the largest anthroponymic trees or nests are the following: *Anna* (82 new given names and of these, 75 are variants and 7 are sub-variants); *Andrejs* (68 new given names and of these, 44 are variants and 24 are sub-variants); *Antonijs* (58 new given names and of these, 19 are variants and 39 are sub-variants); *Aleksandrs* (51 new given names and of these, 24 are variants and 27 are sub-variants); *Bartolomejs* (48 new given names and of these, 37 are variants and 11 are sub-variants); *Adelheide* (31 new given names and of these, 18 are variants and 13 are sub-variants).

The following are some personal names-etymons that have been borrowed from other languages and modified: a) by omitting the first part; so-called aphesis (= loss of one or more sounds from the beginning of a word): *Fredis* (< *Alfrēds*), *Gita* (< *Brigita*), *Heide* (< *Adelheide*), *Nese* (< *Agnese*); b) by omitting the second part; sometimes it can be called as apocope (= the loss of one or more sounds from the end of a word): *Adele* (< *Adelheide*), *Agne* (< *Agnese*), *Alfs* (< *Alfrēds*), *Barba* (< *Barbara*); c) by adding the suffix and the ending: *Almīne* (< *Alma*), *Andija* (< *Anda*); d) by adding the diminutive suffix and the ending: *Agnīte* (< *Agne*), *Ainiņa* (< *Aina*), *Annuža* (< *Anna*); e) by connecting two given names and creating new two-stem names: *Anmarija* (*Anna* + *Marija*), *Ankatrīna* (*Anna* + *Katrīna*), *Anlīze* (*Anna* + *Līze*), *Elianna* (*Elizabete* + *Anna*).

Most of the analysed alterations have been coined in other languages as hypocoristic forms and have been adopted as a ready-made form in Latvian. Examples of these are: *Andžejs*, *Anžejs* from Polish, *Andrus* from Estonian, *Benita* from Spanish, Italian, *Endijs* from English.

Many forms of given names have been borrowed from or through German, such as *Adelija*, *Agneta*, *Gita*, *Heide*, and *Zanders*.

Several given names have also been created in Latvian, such as *Anna* > *Annele*, *Annuža*, *Ance*, *Amanda* > *Anda*, *Andulis*, *Agne* > *Agnīte*, *Antonija* > *Anta*, *Barbara* > *Baiba*, *Bartolomejs* > *Bērtulis*, *Bernhards* > *Biernis*.

Further research is needed to draw other possible anthroponymic “trees”. This research would include the following information: the approximate time that a



particular given name was recorded in Latvia; when it first appeared in name almanacs; from which language the name has come; which names were coined in Latvian; the popularity of a particular name in contemporary Latvia.

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Abstract

This article deals with a Latvian first-name system, and with the given names of common origin in particular. The author (together with Dana Beņķe, a student at the University of Latvia) has collected and made “trees” of the anthroponyms having the same etymon (starting with capital letters *A, Ā, B, C, Č*). The purpose is to gather information about all Latvian given names which have “grown” from the same name or the same etymon, to find the time when particular name was recorded in Latvia, when it was included into name almanacs, to ascertain the contemporary usage of the name in Latvia. The largest anthroponymic nests/trees are the following: etymon name *Anna* (includes 82 names), *Andrejs* (68 names), *Antonijs* (58 names), *Aleksandrs* (51 name), *Bartolomejs* (48 names). Most of the alterations analysed have been coined in other languages as hypocoristic forms and have been adopted into Latvian in a ready-made form. The majority of name variants came to Latvia from or through German and Polish, but there are hypocoristic forms coined and known only in Latvian (e.g. *Anna* > *Annuža*, *Ance*, *Annele*; *Barbara* > *Baiba*). The research, which includes 1114 Latvian names, connected them into “nests” or “trees” of common etymon. This article introduces 10 such anthroponymic “trees”. The research is in the beginning stage and has to be continued.

Keywords: Latvian language, anthroponymy, first name system, etymon